

of his enemies, the emperor included. He took the right, the noble course at Worms in appealing in such a matter to his conscience, the Bible, reason against an authority merely external. Still he was a rebel against both Church and State as then constituted, and his only argument was an appeal to the necessity of the case. The appeal was grand, but it ill became the man whose whole case was based on defiance to established order in Church and State to curse the peasants for following his example, and opposing right to law, justice to convention. From first to last the Reformation inaugurated and maintained by him rested on the assumption that revolution in a great cause is justifiable. It was an assumption for which humanity may well thank God, and canonise those who, at great crises of the world's history, have had the courage to make it and the persistence to defend it.

In making and defending it, at this particular crisis, Luther created an epoch in the world's history. He would fain have remained an obedient subject of the emperor, would fain have attained his end by praying and preaching. But the plain fact remains that he had thrown down the gauntlet to established authority in the Church as represented by the pope, and the State as represented by the emperor and the diet, and only persistent opposition to the will of the hitherto recognised head of the Church and the hitherto recognised head of the empire could bear the Reformation to a triumphant issue.

One thing was absolutely certain. Charles was from the outset immovably hostile to Luther, and would never, if he could help it, suffer the appeal from constituted authority to conscience. He was not only constitutionally and by training incapable of understanding, far less of sympathising with, the spirit of the reformer. To him, as to Francis I., Protestantism was a disloyal religion. It was equivalent to rebellion, and as he understood rebellion he was right in his conclusion. If it was rebellion to appeal from man to God, from constituted authority to conscience, Luther was undoubtedly a rebel, as all progressive spirits have been rebels. Everybody at this period was a rebel who presumed to differ from received opinion, if received opinion had the force of